

# **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: Special Focus**

## **FASD and the Education System**

**The education system needs to recognize the special needs of a person with FASD.** An individual with FASD has brain damage. That person has problems receiving and processing information. He or she often cannot store what they learn or use the information they have been given.

**State-wide training on FASD should be incorporated into all pre-service and in-service training programs for all relevant disciplines.** In the case of FASD, that would include virtually anyone who provides services to children, adolescents, or adults. Training should particularly include law enforcement and social services personnel, mental health and health care providers, and educators.

**Disrupted School Experience** (suspension or expulsion or drop out), was experienced by 43% of school age children with FASD. By the time students with FASD reach adulthood, the rate of disrupted school experience peaks at 70%<sup>1</sup>. Common school problems include: not paying attention, incomplete homework, not getting along with peers, disrupting class, disobeying school rules, talking back to the teacher, fighting, and truancy.

**Children with FASD display a wide range of disabilities and problems.** While their IQ scores can range from 29 to 140, their overall level of adaptive functioning is often much lower than would be expected. Superficial verbal skills often mask a severe deficit in arithmetic and other abstractions such as cause

and effect. This can lead to problems with independent living.

### **Some of the problems reported most frequently by teachers and school administrators include:**

- hyperactivity, impulsivity, attention and memory deficits,
- an inability to complete tasks, disruptiveness,
- poor social skills, extreme gullibility, a need for constant supervision, and
- a disregard for rules and authority.

**Educators can play a pivotal role in determining whether children with FASD reach their maximum potential.** While parents and teachers naturally become frustrated with a child who repeatedly lies, steals, and engages in sexually inappropriate activities, these challenging behaviors often remind us that the child with FASD may not understand the rules. Teachers need information and assistance to manage these challenging children.

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<sup>1</sup> Streissguth et al., *Understanding the Occurrence of Secondary Disabilities in Clients with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE)*, Seattle, University of Washington, 1996

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